

THE UNITED STATES ARMY CHAPLAIN CENTER AND SCHOOL

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF RELIGIOUS

RETREAT FACILITIES IN THE U.S. ARMY

IN KOREA SINCE 1945

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- FRANCIS RAYMOND CAULDER -

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PREFACE

The primary purpose of this paper is to give the reader information about the historical development, operational requirements, and contributions of the Eighth United States Army Religious Retreat Center. Located in Seoul, Korea, this center is one of but two such centers in the Army where a chaplain has been assigned since its beginning. The other one is in Berchtesgaden, Germany.

The terms "Eighth United States Army Religious Retreat Center," "EUSA Retreat Center," "Retreat Center," and "Little Heaven," (Korean designation for the center) will be used synonymously in this paper. The scope of this discussion is limited to this center and any references to similar facilities in other areas will be for comparison purposes or for emphasizing their value on the morale of military personnel.

Grateful acknowledgement of assistance for this presentation must be given to many individuals. Foremost among these are Chaplain (COL) Louie W. Walter, Staff Chaplain, Eighth U.S. Army and Chaplain (LTC) Cecil D. Reed, EUSA Religious Retreat Director. Three staff and faculty members of The Chaplains School provided much help and understanding: Chaplains Kowsky, Venzke, and Jalbert. There were Chaplains Hope and Beal of The U.S. Army Chaplain Board who deserve much thanks. Finally, without the suggestions and information provided by members of Class C-22, USACHCS, who had personal knowledge of the EUSA Retreat Center, this research project would have been a less meaningful experience.

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INTRODUCTION

What is a religious retreat? That question might best be answered by identifying it as a time to draw apart from daily routine to examine life's goals and purposes in the light of God's truth; to draw together in sharing fellowship, worship, and service to God; to draw strength from the resources of the spirit and mind of our religious heritage from God.

For many years the United States Army has recognized the value of religious retreats. Accordingly, under the direction and guidance of chaplains serving around the world many retreat centers have been established. Some of these have been developed and staffed by the Army to provide services to men of all religious faiths. Numerous others have been established and maintained by specific denominations. It would hardly be argued that they have all contributed in one way or another to the morale or spiritual growth of those who have attended.

The highly structured life-style of the military makes it almost imperative that opportunities be provided for getting away occasionally from the hum-drum routine often imposed upon those in military service. This is particularly true of those serving in distant lands. The Eighth United States Army Religious Retreat Center in Seoul, Korea, has been providing such opportunities for thousands for almost twenty years.

I. HISTORY OF THE EUSA RETREAT CENTER

Officially known as The Eighth United States Army Religious Retreat Center, this facility was opened on Washington's Birthday, February 22, 1955, on a site which had long been used for religious shrines. Located on Nam San Mountain in Seoul, Korea, an interesting history precedes its present use.

During the Japanese occupation of Korea for fifty years until 1945, the area was the site of a Shinto religious shrine. Built by slave labor, it was here that the Koreans were forced to pay tribute to the deities of Shinto. Prior to this time the Koreans had used the site for a Buddhist temple.¹

At the end of World War II, the loyal Koreans tore down the Shinto Shrines. Shortly after the Korean conflict, the United States Army reconstructed this compound and The Eighth United States Army Religious Retreat Center was founded by Chaplain (COL) John O. Woods, who at that time was the Eighth Army Chaplain. Chaplain (COL) John K. Connelly was selected to be the first Retreat Center Director. During the first fourteen years of operation there were hosted more than sixty thousand registered retreatants plus other thousands of visitors.²

¹Herman N. Benner, "Religious Retreat Center at Seoul," The Chaplain, XXI (August, 1964), 35.

²Letter from Chaplain (LTC) Cecil D. Reed, EUSA Religious Retreat Director, October 20, 1973.

By agreement with the Republic of Korea government, the Eighth U.S. Army Headquarters leases the several acres of mountainside terrain, rent free, for religious training on a voluntary basis of United States and Republic of Korea Army personnel and related religious groups.

While this paper is mainly concerned with The Eighth United States Army Religious Retreat Center, a word should be said about a similar effort of the Eighth U.S. Army in Japan at the same time. This is relevant here because of the success realized by the Japanese facility for more than a year prior to the opening of the center in Korea.

A sort of forerunner of the retreat center in Seoul, the Kapaun Religious Retreat House was officially opened on December 1, 1954, at the resort center on Sagami Bay, Oiso, Japan. It was named for Emil J. Kapaun, a gallant chaplain who died May 6, 1951, while a prisoner of war at Pyoktong, Korea.³

Kapaun Retreat House enjoyed approximately ten years of very successful service prior to its closing because of a reduction of U.S. military troops on assignment in Japan.

³Julia A. Lacy, "Kapaun Religious Retreat House," The Chaplain, XIII (December, 1956), 25.

II. LAYOUT OF RETREAT FACILITIES

The Eighth United States Army Religious Retreat Center is located approximately two miles north of the Eighth Army Headquarters and beautifully situated half-way up Dragon Mountain commanding a panoramic view of the Han River and distant mountains. Towering over the Retreat Center is Nam Sam Mountain which provides it with the seclusion and privacy required to emphasize the significance of the phrase attributed to the center by the Koreans: "God's Little Heaven - A Place to Draw Near to God." Chaplains with whom this writer has talked who have been there agree that this is a very good description of the place.

By American standards, more than half a million dollars worth of buildings and equipment comprise the EUSA Retreat Center's facilities. The main chapel which comfortably seats 125 people and the smaller blessed sacrament chapel provide opportunities for worship and meditation. A recently remodelled classroom with fifty-eight plush vinyl chairs and portable blackboard, a projection room and 8 x 8 foot screen which becomes a ready made theater, and an area with a piano are all designed to make this a facility which truly meets the demands of the retreatants.

There is a library which contains some 2,000 volumes, including numerous religious and academic encyclopedias, and countless religious books for any denomination. Adjacent to the library are the billeting areas which contain thirty-five two-man rooms in two separate buildings and a retreatants dayroom equipped with pool tables, bumper pool, ping-pong, shuffleboard, and television.

Extensive indoor and outdoor recreational facilities include tennis courts, volleyball, badminton, basketball courts, and an eighteen hole miniature golf course.

A separate dining facility seating ninety-five people is a very popular spot at the EUSA Retreat Center. During most retreats there are five waitresses, one Mess SGT, two cooks, one KP, and one chef, who serve delicious American, European, or Oriental dishes in the attractive dining room.

There are also adequate operational and/or housing facilities for the Retreat Center Chaplain and his staff of seven military personnel and the twenty-nine Korean nationals.⁴

⁴Letter from Chaplain (COL) Louie W. Walter, Staff Chaplain, Headquarters, Eighth United States Army, October 12, 1973.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES OF ASSIGNED PERSONNEL

One of the things which has assured the success of the Eighth United States Army Religious Retreat Center through the years has been the assignment of adequate personnel to perform clearly defined functions. Space does not permit a detailed discussion here of each of these duties. However, in order to understand something of what goes into the making of a successful retreat one must be aware of the jobs required of certain key persons.

The Chaplain, Eighth Army, is responsible for the operational control of the EUSA Religious Retreat Center. Commanders, in fulfilling their responsibilities for the religious life, morals, and morale of their commands, encourage attendance of military personnel of their units to attend the scheduled retreats provided no serious interference with primary military duties is involved. Commanders approve administrative absences for attendance at the Retreat Center.

Perhaps the two individuals whose jobs are absolutely indispensable to the actual running of the center are the Retreat Chaplain Director and the Chaplains Administrator (E7 71M50). Below is a listing of the duties/responsibilities required of their positions.

DIRECTOR

1. Supervises and schedules all activities of the center.
2. Develops programs of retreat activities and insures the maintenance of present facilities and future development and improvement
3. Supervises and controls assigned cadre and civilians.
4. Responsible for physical security of area and control of visitors.

5. Insures continuing programs of public relations with publicity of the center and its activities.
6. Serves as ordering officer for civilian clergy payment.
7. Assigned as Custodian, Eighth Army Chaplain Fund.
8. Supervises an average of 90 to 100 retreatants per week.
9. Provides a program for U.S. Forces, Korea and military services of the Republic of Korea.
10. Frequently represents the U.S. Army on occasions involving ecclesiastical dignitaries from the many religious denominations in Korea and the United States.
11. Serves in other staff activities as directed by the Eighth Army Staff Chaplain.⁵

In a sense, the Retreat Center Director performs functions of supervision comparable to those required of a unit commander. The program requirements for the center influences the selection of a director who is knowledgeable concerning the U.S. Army at troop level, competent in areas of understanding of the several religious groups represented at retreats, and particularly able to converse on religious subjects of interest to professional people and missionaries who visit the Retreat Center.

CHAPLAINS ADMINISTRATOR (E7 71M50)

1. Supervises schedules of retreats.
2. Supervises operation of chapel, classroom, billets, mess hall, and other center facilities.
3. Supervises clerks to insure that matter is disseminated regarding retreat publicity.
4. Exercises supervision and control responsibility over cadre and indigenous personnel assigned.
5. Conducts periodic checks to observe attendance and cooperation of retreatants.
6. Supervises Korean National personnel in police and maintenance of Retreat Center.
7. Receives all incoming and outgoing distribution and correspondence, both classified and unclassified.
8. Responsible for procuring and posting pertinent regulations and publications.
9. Responsible for the overall operation and maintenance of the center in the absence of the director.
10. Supervises 6 military personnel and 29 Korean employees.⁶

⁵Chaplain (LTC) Cecil D. Reed, personal letter.

⁶Ibid

IV. THE RETREAT PROGRAM AND PARTICIPANTS

In our American Judeo-Christian way of life, it is a truism that a soldier who is loyal to the disciplines of his religious faith is not only a better soldier and ambassador of his country, but in his personal life is better able to resist the life-destroying temptations of a pagan culture.

What generally makes up the retreat program? The average day starts with a religious worship period in the chapel about 7:30 A.M., with breakfast at eight. The morning is usually spent with lectures, discussion and study groups. A quiet time follows lunch with afternoon conferences, workshops, and organized recreation. Dinner is served about 5:00 P.M. and the evening's activities may consist of religious addresses, spiritual exercises in religious disciplines, sound motion pictures, discussion, and a snack fellowship hour. Catholic retreats may vary somewhat but for the most part the retreats follow a general pattern.

The EUSA Retreat Center is also the center of many other religious activities associated with the U.S. mission in Korea. Denominational groups and Korean/American University faculties join in fellowship for retreats and special occasions. Members of the Jewish faith usually overflow the center's facilities for their high holy day observances. Their retreats are given priority over others during this time.

Normally, Protestant and Roman Catholic retreats are scheduled on alternate weeks. One week each quarter may be kept open for inventory and refurbishing at the discretion of the director.

During the first nine years of operation, February 1955 through December 1964, the EUSA Retreat Center retrained more than 36,400 military personnel in the religious beliefs and disciplines of their faith. Chaplains of the Eighth Army Command served as retreatmasters, assisted by American civilian missionary clergy from the many different missions serving Korea.⁷

The table below gives information concerning numbers of participants in retreat programs during the last nine years.

ATTENDANCE FIGURES: 1965-1973

Year	Yearly Total	Monthly Average
1965	6,806	567
1966	5,936	495
1967	5,485	457
1968	5,264	439
1969	4,785	399
1970	4,488	374
1971	4,471	372
1972	7,509	626
1973	9,840	820 (projection)*
TOTALS	54,584	4,549

*Based on January-September 1973 figures.

For most of this center's existence, Republic of Korea personnel retreats were limited to four or five a year. Recently, however, the number programmed has sharply increased: twenty-four in 1972 and twenty-five in 1973. This has been a significant factor in the increased attendance during these two years.

Recent campaigns by the Retreat Director and the EUSA Staff Chaplain's Office to obtain support of unit commanders in allowing their troops to attend retreats has met with marked success. Coupled with this has been a change in scheduling, which reduces the number of General Protestant

⁷Benner, Religious Retreat Center, p. 38.

Retreats and Catholic Retreats while increasing the number of special denominational retreats and, as pointed out, the ROK retreats. The results have been impressive; the Protestant Retreats have virtually doubled in attendance; the Catholic participation has risen by about 50%. Of course, it should be noted that there are substantially more Protestant personnel in country than Catholics.

The EUSA Retreat Center is also utilized by other special groups for a variety of constructive purposes. These are all a part of the overall program of the center. Freedom House (Yongsan Drug Rehabilitation Center) has a program every Friday, whereby the current residents have the opportunity to receive therapy and exchange views in a very relaxed and attractive atmosphere.

Every Tuesday evening of both Catholic and Protestant retreats, the Retreat Center, in conjunction with the Eighth Army Public Affairs Office, has a Cultural Exchange Program, during which the Americans on retreat have the opportunity to meet and fellowship with Korean college students. This is usually one of the most popular aspects of each retreat program. As a special service, the EUSA Retreat Center provides the use of its facilities to the regional division of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints every Sunday afternoon.⁸

⁸Chaplain (COL) Louie W. Walter, personal letter.

V. CONTRIBUTIONS

In order to evaluate the contributions made by the EUSA Retreat Center, it is important to consider the mission and objectives of the center. In the Standing Operating Procedures it is stated: "The mission...is to provide activities and facilities where personnel of all religious faiths may gather for periods of worship, prayer, meditation and instruction under the guidance of chaplains." The stated objectives are:

1. "To provide maximum use of Eighth U.S. Army Religious Retreat Center by scheduling retreats during the week and on weekends.
2. To schedule retreats in such a manner that personnel of all religious faiths have an opportunity to attend one religious retreat during their tour.
3. To provide at the Religious Retreat Center motivation and activities to strengthen religious life, to develop character and offer training in moral leadership."⁹

Has the EUSA Religious Retreat Center accomplished this mission and met these objectives in the contributions made to those it has served? It is the opinion of this writer, based on his research, personal communications with the Eighth U.S. Army Staff Chaplain, and the Retreat Director, that the contributions of the center have fully justified its continued existence. Some of these have been alluded to elsewhere in this paper. It is impossible to list all the contributions made by this center through the years but following are some of the more significant ones.

The revitalizing effects of the week of relaxation, spiritual reflection, and fellowship on the moral of the troops, officer and enlisted, have been apparent. Many have been led to make a personal commitment to Christ as a

⁹U.S., Department of Army, Five Year Program 1972-1977 (Headquarters Eighth United States Army, Staff Chaplain, APO San Francisco, California, 6 April 1972), p.11.

result of the guidance and teaching received while attending religious retreats. Of these, many stated they had come simply for a "good time."

The ROK retreats have done much to further the friendly relations between the United States and the Republic of Korea. Several chaplains have received official recognition of their efforts in this cause from the Korean government and military. The Korean/American cultural exchange programs provide a healthy atmosphere for both countries' young adults to get a true picture of "how the other half lives." Such programs accomplish much in wiping out the prejudices that either party may have, and thus further enhance the friendly relations of our two countries.

The EUSA Religious Retreat Center has served as a forum where concerned people gather to discuss ideas and propose solutions to problems confronting not only the American soldier, but his Korean counterpart, and citizens of the host country as well. Drug and alcohol abuse seminars, training conferences, and numerous religious activities (non-retreat type) have been held here throughout the center's existence.

Finally, the center has been instrumental in helping the various church-sponsored servicemen's homes utilize their facilities to the fullest by referring many visitors to them. The homes, for their part, spread the word on the EUSA Religious Retreat Center and the very worthwhile services it continues to offer. Thus, the work of drawing men close to God is carried on.

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